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WASHINGTON, D.C. - As Iraqi Christians face a new round of violence this Christmas season, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) issued this statement:

“The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom calls for increased protection of Iraqi Christians, particularly in Mosul and the north, as well as other minority religious groups” said Leonard Leo, USCIRF chair. “USCIRF calls on the Iraqi government to investigate and bring to justice those who have already perpetrated and planned this most recent round of violence.”

Today, bombs exploded in front of the Syrian Orthodox church of St. Thomas and the Chaldean church of St. George in Mosul. The death toll so far is of three dead - a Chaldean Christian and two Muslims. Other media report that on December 15, a Christian baby was killed and 40 persons injured as three bombs were detonated simultaneously targeting Christian churches. On December 17, an Iraqi Christian was killed as he traveled to work. In the last 45 days, four Mosul churches have been attacked. By some estimates, three-quarters of all the Christians in Iraq have fled since 2003, and as the violence targeting them continues, many fear the time will come when there will be no Christians left in Iraq.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF’s principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

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